

Message Text

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 AMMAN 0424

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TAGS: PFOR JO US XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH EX-PRIME MINISTER RIFAI-AREA SITUATION

SUMMARY: RIFAI SAYS HE IS DEEPLY TOUCHED BY PERSONAL COURTESIES OF OUTGOING AND INCOMING ADMINISTRATIONS AND HIGHLY IMPRESSED BY SECRETARY VANCE'S MASTERY OF MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS AND HIGH RANK HE HAS BEEN TOLD THOSE ISSUES HAVE IN NEW ADMINITRATIONS PRIORITIES. HE RETURNS TO JORDAN CONVINCED US WILL NOT ACCEPT PLO AT GENEVA INITIALLY AND THAT IT WANTS JORDAN INVOLVED IN PEACE PROCESS, ESPECIALLY REGARDING WEST BANK ISSUES.

WHILE RIFAI RETAINS SPEKPTICISM THAT ISRAELIS PREPARED FOR SUFFICIENT COMPROMISES FOR PEACE, HE BELIEVES CONFIGURATION OF EVENTS WILL LEAD TO GENEVA. JORDAN MUST ATTEND TO MAINTAIN ITS IMPORTANCE WITHIN ARAB WORLD AND TO US. ARABS NOW WANT JORDAN TO PLAY ROLE IN PEACE PROCESS, LARGELY BECAUSE OF IMPORTANCE OF JORDAN TO PALESTINIAN (I.E. WEST BANK) QUESTION THANKS IN PART TO US/GOI INSISTENCE. RIFAI ADVISES US NOT ONLY TO GET TALKS STARTED BUT HAVE IDEA ABOUT WHERE TALKS SHOULD LEAD, WHICH RIFAI THINKS SHOULD BE FULLY IMPLEMENTING UNSC RESOLUTION 242. ON PALESTINIAN ASPECT OF PEACE PROCESS HE BELIVES A US POSITION FIRMLY PRESENTED THAT PLO NOT ACCEPTABLE INITIALLY
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AT GENEVA WOULD BE ACCEPTED BY ARABS PARTLY BECAUSE PLO INTERNAL DISSENTIONS WOULD WRECK FROM START PEACE CONFERENCE THAT ARAB STATES WANT. HE SEES ARABS AS EVENTUALLY ACCEPTING ALMOST ANYTHING ISRAELI WANTS IN EXCHANGE FOR FULL WITHDRAWAL TO 1967 LINES IN CERTAIN JORDAN WILL REFUSE TO ACEPT ARRANGEMENTS SUCH AS CONTINUATION OF JORDAN VALLEY IN ISRAELI HANDS, AND THINKS BEST PROSPECTS FOR JERUSALEM AGREE-
MENT IS IF IT IS ADDRESSED LAST AND AFTER AGREEMENT ON OTHER ISSUES.

ON JORDAN PLO RELATIONS RIFAI SAID HE BELIEVES HE HELPED TO PERSUADE KING TO ACCEPT NEW DIALOGUE WITH PLO AND SEES ITS FIRST OBJECTIVE AS WORKING OUT TERMS OF ITS FUTURE TIES TO JORDAN AND PROCEEDING FROM THERE TO DISCUSS ARRANGEMENTS TO PREVAIL BETWEEN PLO AND JORDAN DURING NEGOTIATIONS. HE THINKS PLO LEADERSHIP STILL WIDELY DIVORCED FROM REALITY AND THAT ARAB STATES LACK DETAILED PLANNING ON GENEVA SCENARIOS. RIFAI THINKS KING HUSSEIN CAN HANDLE PROBLEM OF TAKING ALL THE BLAME FOR CONCESSIONS THROUGH HIS CURRENT DIALOGUE WITH PLO AND THROUGH CLOSER TIES WITH SYRIA AND EGYPT, ALTHOUGH HE ADMITS JORDAN MUST PLAY CARDS CAREFULLY ON THIS POINT. MAJOR POINT THOUGH IS THAT KING SHOULD PLAY ACTIVE ROLE AND DECIDE NOW TO DO SO BUT BE CAREFUL AND CIRCUMSPECT IN HIS TACTICS.

THESE REPRESENT CLEARER IDEAS OF ALL JORDANIANS I HAVE TALKED TO IN RECENT DAYS (INCLUDING KING) OF WHAT MUST BE DONE AND HOW TO GO ABOUT IT. RIFAI EXPECTS TO CONTINUE AS PRIVATE BUT INFLUENTIAL ADVISER AND OCCASIONAL EMISSARY OF KING IN MONTHS AHEAD. ALTHOUGH RIFAI IS SOMEWHAT OF A RISK TAKING FREEWHEELER AND THERE IS STRONG OPPOSITION TO HIM FROM CONSERVATIVE EAST BANKERS IMPORTANT TO KING
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INCLUDING SOME IN ARMED FORCES DO BELIEVE HIS CLEAR UP-BEAT ACTION ORIENTED VIEWS AND OTHER ASPECTS OF HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH KING HUSSEIN WILL MAKE HIM HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO JORDAN'S DECISIONS IN FORTHCOMING DIPLOMATIC MOVES IN MIDDLE EAST. END SUMMARY

1. I MET WITH EX PRIME MINISTER RIFAI ON JANUARY 22 FOLLOWING HIS RETURN FROM THE UNITED STATES. WHILE TALK COVERED NUMBER OF SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES REPORTED BELOW RIFAI WANTED ME TO MAKE CLEAR THAT HE WAS DEEPLY TOUCHED AND HONORED BY THE RECEPTION GIVEN HIM BY BOTH THE OUTGOING AND INCOMING ADMINISTRATIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION HE MENTIONED FORMER SECRETARY'S KISSINGER'S LUNCHEON FOR HIM AND HIS MEETING WITH SECRETARY DESIGNATE VANCE.

2. RIFAI SAID HE WAS HIGHLY IMPRESSED BY SECRETARY VANCE'S CLEAR MASTERY OF THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM ("CLEARLY A GREAT DEAL OF HOMEWORK HAD BEEN DONE") HIS THOUGHTFUL QUESTIONS POSED TO RIFAI AND THE FACT THAT THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM RANKED SO HIGH ON THE NEW ADMINISTRATIONS LIST OF PRIORITIES.

3. RIFAI ALSO TOLD ME THAT AS A RESULT OF ALL OF HIS MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON HE CAME BACK CLEARLY CONVINCED THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOT PREPARED TO SEE THE PLO INVITED TO ATTEND GENEVA AT THE OUTSET AND IS COUNTING TO A GREAT EXTENT ON JORDAN PLAYING A VIABLE ROLE IN THE PEACE PROCESS, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO DEALING WITH ISRAELI OVER THE WEST BANK. RIFAI AS YOU KNOW HAS BEEN A SKEPTIC AND A PESSIMIST ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF CREATING A VIABLE PEACE IN THE AREA HE BELIEVES IN EFFECT THAT WHATEVER THE ISRAELIS MIGHT BE PREPARED TO DO IN THE SINIA AND ON THE GOLAN, THEY ARE SECRET

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ON THE BOTTOM LINE AS FAR AS OTHER ISSUES ARE CONCERNED NOT REALLY PREPARED TO GIVE UP THE REQUIRED AMOUNT OF TERRITORY ON THE WEST BANK. HOWEVER HE SEES THE NEW CONFIGURATION OF EVENTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS VERY DEFINITELY LEADING TO A GENEVA CONFERENCE.

4. ON THIS POINT HE IS NOT PREPARED TO SEE JORDAN EXCLUDED RECOGNIZING HE SAYS THAT JORDAN IF EXCLUDED WOULD LOSE FRIENDS AND SUPPORT IN THE ARAB WORLD AND WOULD BE OF LITTLE CONTINUING INTEREST AS

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AS WELL TO THE US. HIS JUDGEMENT IS THAT THE ARABS ALL NOW WANT JORDAN BACK IN THE GAME SOME FOR REASONS OF PURE SELF INTEREST--THEY CANNOT GET THEIR OWN TERRITORY BACK WITHOUT NEGOTIATIONS AND THEY CANNOT BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT ALSO ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM OF THE WEST BANK AND ISRAEL WILL NOT ADDRESS THAT ISSUE WITH THE PLO, SO ONLY JORDAN CAN UNLOCK THAT PART OF THE LOG JAM. OTHERS FOR MORE ESSENTIALLY ALTRUISTIC REASONS--THEY SEE A NEED TO RESOLVE THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE BEFORE PEACE CAN BE BROUGHT TO THE AREA AND THE WEST BANK IS THE

ONLY LOCUS FOR A SOLUTION TO THAT PROBLEM AND THE US AND ISRAEL WILL ONLY IN EFFECT DEAL WITH JORDAN OVER THAT POINT.

5. I ASKED RIFAI WHAT WOULD BE HIS ADVISE TO US AT THIS POINT. HE SAID THE US WILL NEED TO GET TALKS STARTED. IT MUST KNOW WHERE IT WANTS TO GO WHEN IT DOES THAT IT MUST HAVE CONFIDENCE ABOUT WHERE TALKS WILL END UP. THE US IS THE "AUTHOR" OF 242 AND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. AT SOME POINT PREFERABLY EARLY THE US MUST DEVELOP ITS OWN POSITION CONSISTENT WITH 242 ABOUT THE END POINT OF THE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS SINCE 1973 THERE HAS BEEN NO SUCH US POSITION WHICH HELPED TO REDUCE THE AMBIGUITIES IN 242. BUT IF THE
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US DID SO IT COULD MOVE THE PROBLEM VERY FAR FORWARD.

6. MOVING ON TO THE QUESTION OF THE PALESTINIANS I ASKED RIFAI HOW HE SAW THAT QUESTION DEVELOPING. ON GENEVA HE SAID THE ARABS SHOULD BE MADE TO UNDERSTAND BY THE US THAT IT CAN OR CANNOT SUPPORT PLO ATTENDANCE AT GENEVA. HIS OWN VIEW WAS THAT THE US FOR A NUMBER OF REASONS PARTICULARLY LACK OF DOMESTIC SUPPORT WAS VERY UNLIKELY TO INVITE THE PALESTINIANS TO COME TO GENEVA. HERE HE NOTED THE AGREEMENT ON GENEVA PROVIDES THAT THE PARTIES HAD TO INVITE THE PALESTINIANS. HE FELT SURE THE PARTIES COULD BE PERSUADED TO MEET AT GENEVA WITHOUT THE PALESTINIANS IN ORDER INTER ALIA TO CONSIDER WHETHER THE PLO SHOULD OR COULD BE INVITED TO ATTEND. ASSAD HAD SAID AS MUCH THE OTHER DAY HE WOULD SHORTLY GO TO DAMASCUS AND WOULD HAVE A BETTER READING ON ASSADS VIEWS.

7. CONTINUING RIFAI SAID HE THOUGHT THE ARABS SHOULD ALSO BEGIN TO RECOGNIZE THAT IF THEY EXPENDED A LOT OF POLITICAL CAPITAL ON GETTING THE PALESTINIANS TO GENEVA, THEY WOULD HAVE LESS TO SPEND ON GETTING TERRITORIAL CONCESSIONS THEY BADLY WANTED. FINALLY HE NOTED THAT THE PLO HAVE NOT YET AGREED ON WHO AMONG THEM IS THEIR "SOLE" LEGITIMATE" REPRESENTATIVE. ALL THEY CAN DO AT A CONFERENCE IS CARRY ON A WRECKING OPERATION. THEY HAVE SUCH DISAGREEMENT AMONG THEMSELVES THAT THEY WILL BECOME CONFERENCE DESTROYERS. ON THE OTHER HAND HE SAW JORDAN'S ROLE AS BEING CONSTRUCTIVE. JORDAN COULD HELP BY KEEPING THE PLO OUT OF DIRECT NEGOTIATIONS AND IN EFFECT ALLOWING THEM UNTIL THE VERY END TO CLING TO THEIR OUTMODED IDEAS ABOUT GETTING BACK ALL OF PALESTINE, OR AT LEAST TO A POSITION OF AVOID GIVING UP SUCH IDEAS IN PUBLIC

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UNTIL SOME AGREEMENT IS WORKED OUT.

8. WE TURNED NEXT TO THE KINGS DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO. RIFAI SAID HE HAD URGED THIS ON THE KING ON HIS RETURN AFTER CONCLUDING THAT THE US DID NOT WANT THE PLO AT THE OPENING OF GENEVA. THE KING AND HE HAD HAD A LONG MEETING ON JANUARY 17, AND ANOTHER DINNER TOGETHER AT THE RIFAI HOUSE JANUARY 18 TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT. RIFAI THOUGHT THE KING SHOULD BEGIN THE DIALOGUE BY GETTING THE PLO TO TRY TO DEFINE AND THEN AGREE WITH JORDAN ON WHAT THEY EXPECTED OR HOPED TO WORK OUT AT THE END OF THE PROCESS. THEY SHOULD ASSUME THERE WOULD BE A PLO ENTITY ON THE WEST BANK. THEY SHOULD THEN WORK OUT THE TERMS OF THE FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS BETWEEN THAT ENTITY AND JORDAN. FROM THAT POINT THEY COULD THEN WORK BACKWARD WITH SOME CONSIDERABLE EASE TO THE ARRANGEMENT WHICH COULD PREVAIL DURING NEGOTIATIONS.(RIFAI DID NOT REFER TO SADAT DURING THIS PART OF THE CONVERSATION EXPECT IN GENERAL TERMS. HOWEVER WHAT HE PROPOSED ABOVE IS VERY LIKE WHAT SADAT TOLD KING HUSSEIN AT ASWAN THAT HE THOUGHT HUSSEIN SHOULD DO WITH THE PLO).

9. RIFAI SAID THAT THE PLO LIVES STILL IN A KIND OF DREAM WORLD. HE MET ARAFATS POLITICAL ADVISER HANI AL HASSAN WHEN THE LATTER WAS HERE LAST WEEK. HE TOLD HASSAN THAT HE HAD JUST COME BACK FROM THE US. HE SAID TO HASSAN THAT SUPPOSE FOR THE SAKE OF DISCUSSION I TELL YOU THAT THE US WILL NOT PERMIT THE PLO TO ATTEND THE GENEVA CONFERENCE FROM THE OUTSET. HASSAN RIFAI SAID WAS SHOCKED. HE SAID THAT THE ARABS NEED TO COME OUT OF THEIR DREAM WORLD. SADAT AND ASSAD HAVE NOT THOUGHT CAREFULLY ABOUT HOW THEY WILL HANDLE GENEVA. SIMPLE ISSUES LIKE WHETHER THE SEPARATE WORKING GROUPS THAT EGYPT WANTS TO SET UP WILL BE ALLOWED TO IMPLEMENT AGREEMENTS REACHED AS
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THEY GO ALONG OR WHETHER THEY WILL ALL HAVE TO WAIT UNTIL EVERYTHING IS AGREED HAVE NOT BEEN ADDRESSED. THE ARABS BADLY NEED TO GIVE ALL OF THESE MATTERS CONSIDERABLE THOUGHT.

10. RIFAI SAID HE KNOWS THAT THE KING IS DEEPLY DISTURBED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING MADE SOLELY RESPONSIBLE BY ALL THE ARABS FOR AN AGREEMENT AND THE SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS DEMANDED IN CONNECTION WITH SUCH BY THE ISRAELIS ON THE WEST BANK. THE KING HE BELIEVES MUST USE

HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE PLO AND HIS EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH EGYPT AND SYRIA TO STRENGTHEN AND UNDERPINE HIS HAND ON THIS POINT. OTHERWISE HE RUNS RISK.

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FURTHER THE KINGS CLOSE ADVISORS BELIEVE THAT HE SHOULD STAY BACK FROM ALL INVOLVEMENT. RIFAI DIS AGREES COMPLETELY AND BELIEVES THE DIALOGUE WITH THE PLO ALREADY MARKS THE FACT THAT THE KING IS BEGINNING TO ACCEPT HIS (RIFAI'S) ADVICE ON THIS POINT. RIFAI DOES CONSIDER IT IMPORTANT THAT THE KING NOT MOVE TOO RAPIDLY OR GET OUT IN FRONT TACTICALLY OF THE OTHER ARAB STATES. HOWEVER HE INSISTS THAT THE KING MUST MAKE A DECISION ABOUT HIS OBJECTIVE AND THEN SET THE TACTICS LATER.

PRINCE HASSAN AND OTHER RIFAI SAYS ARE OPPOSED TO THIS APPROACH WHICH IMPLIES CLEAR JORDANIAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE PEACE PROCESS.

11. FINALLY RIFAI CAGEY ABOUT A ROLE FOR HIMSELF IN THE PROCESS. HE DOES INTEND TO VISIT SYRIA SHORTLY AND WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE AS A CLOSE THE CLOSEST ADVISOR TO THE KING ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS ISSUES. HE ALSO WOULD NOT BE AVERSE TO TAKING ON SOME PRIVATE MISSIONS FOR THE KING AROUND THE ARAB WORLD TELLING THE OTHER ARABS EXACTLY "HOW IT IS" IN TERMS WHICH ARE TYPICAL OF HIS BLUNT AND SOMEWHAT IRREVERENT MANNER WHEN HE WANTS TO BE THAT WAY.

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12. RIFAI NOTED THAT JORDAN AND THE OTHER ARABS WOULD BE PREPARED TO PROVIDE ALMOST ANYTHING ISRAEL WANTED TO RETURN FOR FULL CESSION OF THE TERRITORY OCCUPIED IN 1967. HE WAS NOT VERY SPECIFIC ON WHAT THE ARABS MIGHT BE PREPARED TO GIVE FOR A TURN OF

LESS THAN FULL OCCUPIED TERRITORY.

13. AS FOR JORDAN ON THE WEST BANK JORDAN IS
PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE "MINOR BORDER RECTIFICATIONS"
IF THAT IS WHAT THE ISRAELIS WISH TO DO. HOWEVER
JORDAN UNDER ANY CONDITIONS IS NOT PREPARED TO AGREE
TO SOMETHING WHICH FOR EXAMPLE LEFT THE JORDAN VALLEY
IN ISRAELI HANDS. ON JERUSALEM RIFAI WAS INSISTENT
THAT IT BE LEFT TO THE VERY LAST. ONLY A SOLID STAKE
IN A GOOD AGREEMENT WOULD BE SUFFICIENT CATALYST
TO HELP RESOLVE AN ISSUE AS DEEPLY EMOTIONAL AS
JERUSALEM HE STATED.

14. COMMENT RIFAI OF THE JORDANIANS WE HAVE
MET IN RECENT DAYS INCLUDING THE KING HAS THE
CLEAREST IDEAS ON WHAT TO DO AND WHAT MUST BE DONE.
AS HE MOVES INTO THE VACUUM AROUND THE KING AND WE
EXPECT THE TWO OF THEM WILL BE DROWN CLOSER TOGETHER
IN THE DAYS AHEAD AS THE MIDDLE EAST MOVES TOWARD
CENTER STAGE, HIS ADVICE WILL BECOME MORE SIGNIFICANT
FOR WHAT JORDAN DOES AND WILL DO. HIS SHARP RESK
TAKING APPROACH WILL CONTRAST KEENLY WITH THE MAINLY
CONSERVATIVE DITHER THAT NOW SURROUNDS THE KING.
RIFAI TOO MAKES MISTAKES, AND WHEN HE MAKES
THEM AS IN ALL THE THINGS HE DOES HE MAKES THEM
BIG* IT PROMISES TO BE AN INTERESTING PERIOD
AHEAD AND ONE WHICH WILL BEAR CLOSE WATCHING BY US.
END COMMENT.
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